

Meeting of the Senior Sub-Cabinet Work-group on Civic and Social Engagement January 13, 2016

Attending: Bruce Adams, OCP; Phil Smakula, MCRD; Odile Brunetto, HHS/A&D; Julian Norment, OCP; Marsha Weber, CEX; Dennis Linders, CEX; Mara Mayor, Vital Living Network; Leah Bradley, JCA/Interages; Carol Croll, JCA/Interages; Natasha Sacks, Montgomery College; Kasey Kaseman, OCP; Catherine Matthews, Upcounty Regional Ofc.; Pam Holland Tech-Moxie; Jay Kenney, HHS; Robert Nisbet, JCA Senior Tech; Vivian Hsueh, Commission on Aging Alumni and CASSA; Anna Stokes, OASIS; Kathleen Meaney Stobie, MC Vol Ctr.; Austin Heyman, OCP.

Dennis Linders presented a summary of the survey and focus information on both civic engagement and access to technology. We discussed the cross-cutting issues of transportation and access to information. We will advise Shawn Brennan, Transportation and Mobility Coordinator, of the importance of enabling seniors to be able to get to libraries, as well as senior centers, and to explore the option of including neighboring libraries in the runs to the five senior centers. It was pointed out that the data shows that County seniors choose to spend more time in libraries than in recreation centers. Other modes of transportation to libraries should also be explored, e.g. utilizing drivers from the villages' volunteers.

Bruce Adams wanted clarification about the county stat info that the County volunteer website was hard to navigate. Was this expressed just once or often and was this confused with the County website? Since the Volunteer Center has installed a new website, it would be important to know the answer to this question.

The second cross-cutting issue of access to information on civic engagement was discussed. Consideration was proposed for utilizing the Beacon newspaper. However, it was unclear how many seniors in the county read it. Vivian Hsueh asserted that the ethnic communities probably do not read it at all, suggesting that each community needed to take responsibility for providing information on county programs and services. OCP will explore how best to communicate information to the various ethnic groups through the leadership of each community. In addition, insuring that the Senior News provided each month electronically by Aging and Disability Service be more widely distributed through list-serves of civic associations, the faith community, as well as the villages.

On access to technology, Bruce asked for clarification on the estimate of percentage of seniors who do not utilize the internet. There was extensive discussion of how to translate the summit's emphasis on developing further intergenerational connections, especially around technology. Reference was made to the libraries connecting to some 52 MCPS students to assist in the libraries in how to utilize e-books, but much more on other technology questions. Interages is piloting a program with the Olney village, Olney library and MCPS students. It was proposed that a meeting be arranged for Bruce and Austin to talk with Interages and OASIS, the libraries and MCPS on how to grow the intergenerational Opportunities for MCPS students receiving student learning credit, with the needs of seniors of assistance with various aspects of accessing technology. It was also proposed that there be a technology fair or day at a senior center in the spring, similar to what was done for Elder Abuse Day. In discussing the initiative of AARP to develop AR-Tek, a computer-based tutorial program for seniors, question was raised as to whether AARP-MD might play a role in facilitating its use in Montgomery County.

A third priority recommendation from the summit was to work to increase voluntarism. One suggestion which was supported, is to pilot a program with MC employees who are getting close to retirement age

by helping them to start to envision possibilities beyond their traditional career, which would be a good complement. This could serve as a model to the business community. It was pointed out that last year Kathleen Stobie offered information sessions on three occasions in libraries on how to find volunteer opportunities and the resources the county offers, as well as opportunities to work with non-profits possibly as board members. The sessions were well-attended and well-received.

ACTION SUMMARY:

1. Contact Shawn Brennan to invite the Transportation Workgroup to discuss transportation options for seniors to libraries.
2. Technology training utilizing students: visit Interages/Olney for Life/Olney Library model and followup with MCPS, Libraries, Interages and OASIS.
3. Senior Tech Day – Recreation Dept-together with JCA/OASIS/Tech-Moxie and others
4. Reaching out to MC Human Resources Dept. about workshops for those contemplating retirement to include envisioning possibilities beyond their career.
5. Further expanding the Pro Bono programs
6. RSVP Coordinator organizing information sessions in libraries on how to search for volunteer opportunities, including serving on non-profit boards.
7. Exploring AARP/MD interest in supporting technology help for seniors e.g utilizing AR-TEK tutorials.
8. OCP to consider if it is possible to identify ethnic group leaders to provide senior information for dissemination to their communities.

The items referring to information will also be forwarded to Pat Lacefield for consideration by the communications work-group.